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ABSTRACT

Project Opportunity is a longitudinal demonstration guidance project that seeks to identify and encourage academically talented students to complete high school and continue their education, generally at a college or a vocational/technical institution. Project Opportunity operates at 11 locations in the South. A report, the first of two comprising this document, summarizes an analysis of the persistence of 712 Project Opportunity students who entered four-year colleges in 1970, 1971, and 1972. Some 81 percent completed the first year, and about 70 percent completed two years of college. Of the student participants in the program, some 78 percent are black and nearly half come from families where the total family annual income is less than $6,000. The project has seen some 1,600 students in four successive groups graduate from high school and over three-quarters of them have continued with some form of post-secondary education. The second report presents data showing that the median proportion of black students among the freshman classes at predominantly white institutions in the South in 1972-73 was 6 percnt, that the proportion of black freshmen at public institutions is double that found in private institutions, and that 60 percent of the black students at all types of predominantly white institutions complete their freshman year with over a C average. (Author/JM)

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PROJECT OPPORTUNITY REPORTS

Research and Evaluation
Report Number 1973-1

-Persistence of Project Opportunity Students in College-

Project Opportunity is a longitudinal demonstration guidance project that seeks to identify and encourage academically talented students to complete high school and continue their education--generally at a college or a vocational/technical institution. Project Opportunity operates at eleven locations in the South.

Begun in 1964 under the sponsorship of the College Entrance Examination Board, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and seventeen colleges and universities, the Project has seen four groups of students finish high school. (Group I students graduated in 1970; Group II, in 1971; Group III, in 1972; and Group IV, in 1973.) Some 712 students from the first three of these groups had, by the spring of 1973, attended college for various periods of time. The persistence of those students who had enrolled at a four-year college is examined in this report. Of those students, 78 percent are black; 22 percent white. Some 62 percent are female; 38 percent male. Of the 555 black students, 64 percent entered a black college while 36 percent entered a predominately white college.

Data for this report was obtained by asking the registrars at the colleges where the students enrolled to report on the status of the students after the close of the first semester or quarter. Since the reports were completed in the spring, the data for the Group III students (those graduating in high school in 1972) does not show whether these students completed the year--only whether they were enrolled at the time the report was filled out.

Table 1 shows the persistence of the 555 black Project Opportunity students who enrolled at either a black or predominately white four-year college. Examination of Table 1 shows no clear cut persistence advantage for either the blacks who enrolled at black colleges or those who enrolled at predominately white colleges. The comparisons involving the Group I and Group III students favor those who enrolled at the predominately white colleges while comparisons involving Group II students favor

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those enrolling at black colleges. The similarity of the persistence rates is most interesting in view of a previous Project Opportunity report[1] which showed that blacks who chose predominately white colleges were much more likely to have a single Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score over 500; it would seem reasonable to assume that students with higher SAT scores would be more likely to persist in college, but the similarity of the persistence rates of blacks at the black colleges and at the predominately white colleges suggests that the absolute score on the SAT shows little relationship to persistence in college when a group of students from several different colleges are studied.

Table 1. Persistence of Black Project Opportunity Students at Four-Year Black and at Four-Year Predominately White Colleges (in percent).

	Enrolled at a Black College	Enrolled at a Predominately White College
Group I	(N=125)	(N=94)
Completed one year	80	87
Completed two years	67	70
Enrolled in spring of third year	62	65
Group II	(N=119)	(N=50)
Completed one year	77	74
Enrolled in spring of second year	70	64
Group III	(N=112)	(N=55)
Enrolled in spring of first year	84	96

Table 2 compares data for the 157 white students with that for the blacks. The persistence rates for the two racial groups is quite similar.

Table 2. Persistence of Black and White Project Opportunity Students at Four-Year Colleges (in percent).

	Blacks	Whites
Group I	(N=219)	(N=42)
Completed one year	83	86
Completed two years	68	76
Enrolled in spring of third year	63	69
Group II	(N=169)	(N=61)
Completed one year	76	77
Enrolled in spring of second year	68	74
Group III	(N=167)	(N=54)
Enrolled in spring of first year	88	89

Table 3 shows the persistence rates of the male and female students. Here again, the rates between the two comparison groups are similar.

Table 3. Persistence of Male and Female Project Opportunity Students at Four-Year Colleges (in percent).

	Males	Females
Group I	(N=103)	(N=158)
Completed one year	85	82
Completed two years	67	72
Enrolled in spring of third year	60	66
Group II	(N=92)	(N=138)
Completed one year	76	78
Enrolled in spring of second year	66	72
Group III	(N=77)	(N=144)
Enrolled in spring of first year	94	85

Table 4 summarizes the data without regard to race or sex. Combining the data from Groups I and II it can be found that 81 percent of the Project Opportunity students in these two groups completed one year of college, while some 70 percent either completed the second year or were enrolled in the spring of their second year.

Table 4. Persistence of All Project Opportunity Students at Four-Year Colleges (in percent).

Group I	(N=261)
Completed one year	84
Completed two years	70
Enrolled in spring of third year	64
Group II	(N=230)
Completed one year	77
Enrolled in spring of second year	70
Group III	(N=221)
Enrolled in spring of first year	88

In comparing this Project Opportunity data with other studies, a recent study by Alexander Astin[7] was found which provides a plethora of national persistence rates for various groups of college students at different types of colleges. Astin's study was based on a random sample of 45,432 students entering two and four-year colleges in the fall of 1966. Astin surveyed those same students in 1967 and again in 1971, after which he weighted the data to give it a closer match to the national student profile. Based on his sampling procedures, Astin reported that 78 percent of all students entering four-year colleges and universities return for a second year; for blacks the percentage was 75.8; for whites it was 78.1; for men, 78.7; and for women 77.1.

It can thus be seen that the persistence rates of the Project Opportunity students compare most favorably with the "national" statistics reported by Astin. It should be remembered that

Project Opportunity students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. A previous report[3] showed that the median family income of these students was $6,382 in 1971-72 and that 46 percent of the students came from families where the family income was less than $6,000. That students from such backgrounds do so well in persisting in college may seem surprizing but John Summerskill[4] reported in 1962 that socio-economic background bears little relationship to persistence--although it may make a difference as to whether a student goes to college in the first place.

In summary, an analysis of the persistence of 712 Project Opportunity students who entered four-year colleges in 1970, 1971, and 1972 revealed that some 81 percent complete the first year and that about 70 percent complete two years of college. These rates compare favorably with "national" rates reported by Astin. Differences between blacks and whites and between men and women appeared slight.

References

1. Project Opportunity Report 1972-6. College Choices of Outstanding Black Students in Project Opportunity. Southern Regional Office, College Entrance Examination Board.

2. Astin, Alexander W., College Dropouts: A National Profile. American Council on Education, Washington, D. C., 1972.

3. Project Opportunity Report 1972-5. Post-Secondary Enrollment Patterns of Project Opportunity Students. Southern Regional Office, College Entrance Examination Board.

4. Summerskill, John, "Dropouts from College" in Sanford, N., The American College, Wiley, 1962.

PROJECT OPPORTUNITY REPORTS

Research and Evaluation Report
Number 1973-2

-A Survey of the Admission, Enrollment, and Retention of Black Students at Predominately White Colleges in the South, August, 1973-

Project Opportunity has operated as a demonstration guidance project for disadvantaged youth at eleven locations in the South since 1964. Of the student participants in the program, some 78 percent are black and nearly half come from families where the total family annual income is less than $6,000. The Project has seen some 1,600 students in four successive groups graduate from high school and over three-quarters of them have continued with some form of post-secondary education.

One of the goals of Project Opportunity has been to expand the educational opportunities available to the participating students. When the Project was being conceived in 1963 few black students were enrolled in the predominately white colleges of the region; their opportunities for choosing from among all of the colleges of the region were limited. Recent data still shows that blacks in the college-age population of the region attend college at a much lower rate than whites of comparable age. Tables 1 and 2 bear on this point. (Data for these tables was obtained from U. S. Census reports and from reports by colleges submitted to the Office of Civil Rights.)

Table 1. Black College Enrollment, Fall 1970, in Ten Southern States

	College-Age Population	College Enrollment	Percent Enrolled
Alabama	69,502	13,650	19.6
Florida	79,296	12,070	15.2
Georgia	95,783	13,880	14.5
Kentucky	20,464	3,193	15.6
Louisiana	86,457	18,674	21.6
Mississippi	63,158	14,457	22.9
North Carolina	100,885	20,026	19.8
South Carolina	67,835	7,395	10.9
Tennessee	49,232	10,579	21.5
Virginia	69,621	12,499	18.0
Total	702,233	126,423	18.0

Table 2. White College Enrollment, Fall 1970, in Ten Southern States

	College-Age Population	College Enrollment	Percent Enrolled
Alabama	179,076	60,452	33.8
Florida	354,956	130,555	36.8
Georgia	248,224	72,614	29.2
Kentucky	220,756	65,512	29.7
Louisiana	186,657	63,106	33.8
Mississippi	100,733	39,137	38.8
North Carolina	297,556	95,700	32.2
South Carolina	142,242	37,505	26.4
Tennessee	235,309	81,081	34.4
Virginia	290,569	77,947	26.8
Total	2,256,078	723,609	32.1

One of the outstanding features of Project Opportunity was the early assurance given to the black students that they should make plans for attending college and that there were a number of predominately white colleges that had agreed to consider their applications without regard to race; these students no longer had to plan almost exclusively on attending a black college. When the first group of Project students graduated from high school in 1970, some 42 percent of the black college-going students in that group chose to enroll in predominately white colleges. The black students in the next two graduating groups have been less inclined to enter predominately white colleges and thus the overall figures for the three groups show that 36 percent of the black Project college-going students have entered such colleges.

In order to compare this rate with black students on a somewhat broader basis, tabulation was made of the black enrollments at both the black colleges and the predominately white colleges in the ten-state region served by the Southern Regional Office of the College Board. The data shown in Table 3 is for fall, 1970, and was largely derived from enrollment reports submitted by colleges to the U. S. Office of Civil Rights and published in the Chronicle of Higher Education, March 29, 1971. Table 3 shows that for the region comprised by the ten southern states, some 26 percent of the black students enrolled in college were enrolled in predominately white colleges in the fall of 1970. Thus, the black students in Project Opportunity are a bit more likely to attend white colleges than black students in the region generally.

Table 3. Black College Enrollment, Fall 1970, at Black and at Predominately White Colleges in Ten Southern States

	Total Black Enrollment	Enrolled at Black Colleges		Enrolled at Predominately White Colleges	
		N	%	N	%
Alabama	13,650	11,344	83	2,306	17
Florida	12,070	5,589	46	6,481	54
Georgia	13,880	11,242	81	2,638	19
Kentucky	3,193	913	28	2,280	72
Louisiana	18,674	14,985	80	3,689	20
Mississippi	14,457	12,194	84	2,263	16
North Carolina	20,026	14,924	74	5,102	26
South Carolina	7,395	5,325	72	2,070	28
Tennessee	10,579	6,789	64	3,790	36
Virginia	12,499	10,013	80	2,486	20
Total	126,423	93,318	74	33,105	26

Since blacks constitute a large majority of the students in Project Opportunity and since up-to-date information about admissions practices should be valuable to them and to those who assist them with their post-secondary school plans, a survey was conducted during the summer of 1973 to determine the extent to which blacks are currently being admitted, enrolled, and retained at predominately white colleges in the region. A survey form was devised and sent to a sample of 106 colleges in the region. In choosing the sample it was decided to send the survey form to all institutions enrolling over 10,000 students and a 25 percent random sample of the remaining two- and four-year colleges in each of the ten states. Responses were received from 80 percent of the institutions enrolling over 10,000 students (20 of 25); 78 percent of the remaining four-year institutions in the sample (35 of 45); and 64 percent of the two-year institutions in the sample (23 of 36). The overall response rate was 74 percent (78 of 106). A summary of the responses will be given for each of the questions on the survey form.

1. Do you ask for racial identification on your application form?

   Percent answering yes:

Public institutions	71
Private institutions	33
Large institutions	67
Small four-year institutions	42
Two-year institutions	61
All institutions	54

Clearly, public institutions and large institutions are much more likely to ask for racial identification on their application forms than small four-year or private institutions. A few respondents felt that the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) required their asking for racial identification while others indicated that asking for racial identification, although optional, was helpful when completing federal government reports or proposals. Some admissions officers pointed out that it was possible to know the race of the applicant even though the question of race was not directly asked.

2. Do you employ black admissions officers or counselors? If so, how many are now employed and when was the first such person employed?

Percent employing black admissions person:

Public institutions	49
Private institutions	11
Large institutions	58
Small four-year institutions	24
Two-year institutions	26
All institutions	34

There were 26 institutions in the sample that reported employment of black admissions personnel and 23 of them (85 percent) indicated that only one black person was on the staff. Three institutions reported having more than one black staff person; two of them had two black admissions staff persons while only one institution had as many as three. The respondents indicated that no black admissions person was employed prior to 1968. About half the reporting institutions who presently have black admissions persons have hired them since 1971. A number of institutions without blacks in their admissions offices reported that they were looking for such personnel and a number of other institutions reported they were using black students to represent them on visits to high schools.

3. How many new freshmen entered your institution last fall (1972) and how many of that group were black?

Median percentage of new freshmen who were black:

Public institutions	9.0
Private institutions	4.5
Large institutions	8.0
Small four-year institutions	3.5
Two-year institutions	9.0
All institutions	6.0

There was considerable range in the percentages reported--from less than one percent to 34 percent. The private institutions reported a range of from one to 16 percent while the publics reported from one to 34. The largest percentage of black freshmen at any of the small four-year colleges was 15.

It is interesting to compare the percentages of blacks enrolled with the responses to items 1 and 2 above. Note that the institutions which have the largest black enrollments seem to be the ones that also ask for racial information on their application forms and employ a black admissions staff person. The exception to this pattern is found with the two-year college that has a relatively high black enrollment but does not tend to employ a black admissions person.

4. Do you give any special consideration in the admission of black students? Do you have a numerical or percentage goal with respect to the admission of black students?

Percentage giving special consideration:

Public institutions	32
Private institutions	24
Large institutions	42
Small four-year institutions	31
Two-year institutions	13
All institutions	28

Only two of the 78 responding institutions indicated they had a numerical or percentage goal for blacks. Many of the two-year colleges indicated that they had an open-door admissions policy and so no special consideration was necessary. A few colleges which give special consideration cited these specifics:

- a more intensive look by the admissions committee at the black student's credentials
- more willingness to disregard low admissions test scores
- more help in obtaining financial aid.

Overall, however, the great majority of the reporting institutions indicated that they give no special consideration in the admission of blacks nor do they have a numerical percentage goal in this regard.

5. Of the new black freshmen who entered last fall, how many:

(a) dropped out during the year?
(b) completed the year with less than a C average?
(c) completed the year with above a C average?

Data obtained from the responses to the item are summarized below:

Academic Performance of Black Freshmen at Predominately White Institutions (1972-73)

	Large Institutions	Small 4-Year Institutions	Two-Year Institutions	Total
Number Responding	20	35	23	78
Number and Percent Supplying Data	8 - 40	24 - 68	14 - 61	46 - 59
Black Students With Data	1254	362	319	1935
% Dropping out	15	14	23	16
% Below C	26	27	17	25
% C or above	59	59	60	59

Based on the data supplied in this survey it seems that about 60 percent of the black freshmen at predominately white institutions in the South complete their first year with a C average or above; a quarter of those entering complete the year, but with less than a C average and about one-sixth of those entering drop out before the close of the year. There seems to be little difference in the academic performance of blacks at the three different types of institutions, except that those at two-year colleges seem a bit more likely to drop out.

Also, it is interesting to note that admissions officers at about 40 percent of the institutions surveyed did not respond to this item on the questionnaire--60 percent of the admissions officers at the large institutions did not respond. In many cases the respondent indicated that the information was not available.

6. Do you tie the admission of financially needy students to your institution's ability to provide them with adequate financial aid?

Percent answering yes:

Public institutions	22
Private institutions	40
Large institutions	10
Small four-year institutions	32
Two-year institutions	43
All institutions	30

Only two of the 20 large institutions reported any tie between admissions and the ability to provide adequate financial aid; these institutions gave qualified responses--"Somewhat" and "Yes, to some degree." One small four-year college reported that all students must be needy before admission can be granted.

7. What proportion of the black students who were admitted actually enrolled?

Median reported proportions:

Public institutions	83
Private institutions	85
Large institutions	62
Small four-year institutions	98
Two-year institutions	86
All institutions	82

It is important to note that some 42 percent of the institutions returning questionnaires were unable or unwilling to respond to this item. Of the 46 institutions that did answer, 13 indicated that all black students who were admitted later enrolled, but none of these institutions had more than 15 black freshman entrants. The lowest reported admitted - enrolled proportion was 33 percent, a figure given by two large public institutions.

Perhaps the most important findings from this survey were that the median proportion of black students among the freshman classes at predominately white institutions in the South in 1972-73 was six percent, that the proportion of black freshmen at public institutions is double that found at private institutions, that 60 percent of the black students at all types of predominately white institutions complete their freshman year with over a C average, and that apparently large numbers of admissions officers do not have data available

to them concerning the academic performance of black students at their institutions. The survey suggests that those institutions that ask for racial identification on their application forms and employ black admissions officers tend to be more successful in attracting black students.

It is gratifying that opportunities are now available for black students in the South to attend all kinds of institutions beyond high school. Project Opportunity has helped several hundred of these students find their way to post-secondary opportunities by identifying them at the seventh or eighth grade and by providing intensive guidance services and enriched educational offerings throughout high school. Unfortunately, the college-going rate for all black students in the South continues to lag far behind that of whites and it is imperative that programs such as Project Opportunity be continued and expanded. In the South, blacks constitute 24 percent of the college-age population, but only 15 percent of the college enrollment; if blacks were to be enrolled at about the same rate as whites, an additional 100,000 black students should be enrolled in college in the ten state southern region. If the discrepancy in college-going rates between whites and blacks in the South is to be reduced, greater numbers of blacks should be encouraged to enroll at predominately white institutions. The survey has shown that significant numbers of blacks are now attending these institutions, but there is considerable variation in the rates between institutions of different types.

Project Opportunity Reports are available from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 795 Peachtree Street, N. E., Fifth Floor, Atlanta, Georgia 30308. Project Opportunity is a cooperative endeavor of the Southern Association and the College Entrance Examination Board.